

PROPOSITION 301

OFFICIAL TITLE

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 2002
A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

ENACTING AND ORDERING THE SUBMISSION TO THE PEOPLE OF A MEASURE RELATING TO THE LAND CONSERVATION FUND.

TEXT OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona, the Senate concurring:

1. Under the power of the referendum, as vested in the Legislature, the following measure, relating to the land conservation fund, is enacted to become valid as a law if approved by the voters and on proclamation of the Governor:

AN ACT

TRANSFERRING MONIES FROM THE LAND CONSERVATION FUND.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

Section 1. Land conservation fund: reversion of monies

On the effective date of this act, the balance of the monies in the land conservation fund reverts, and is transferred, to the state general fund.

2. The Secretary of State shall submit this proposition to the voters at the next general election as provided by article IV, part 1, section 1, Constitution of Arizona.

ANALYSIS BY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The Land Conservation Fund consists of monies appropriated from the state general fund and monies received as donations. \$20,000,000 was appropriated annually for 11 years from the state general fund to the Land Conservation Fund. The final appropriation is scheduled in fiscal year 2010-2011. Monies in the fund must be used to award grants to:

1. Acquire and conserve state trust land or development rights in state trust land.
2. Implement conservation based management or reduce production on state lands leased for agricultural purposes.

Proposition 301 would transfer the remaining balance in the Land Conservation Fund to the state general fund.

ARGUMENTS "FOR" PROPOSITION 301

The Arizona Tax Research Association (ATRA), Arizona's only statewide taxpayer organization, supports Proposition 301. As all Arizonans are now painfully aware, the recession has had a devastating effect on the Arizona economy. Almost 300,000 Arizonans have lost jobs in recent years. The recession has also created historic budget challenges at the state level. Since the high-water mark in Fiscal Year 2007, state general fund revenues have fallen \$3.6 billion or 37%. The state's current structural budget deficit is \$1.7 billion.

In struggling to close state budget deficits over the last three years, state policymakers have faced a myriad of difficult decisions. Taxes have been increased over \$1.2 billion. On-going state spending has been reduced \$1.1 billion. However, despite the progress that has been made, Arizona will continue to be faced with major budget deficits for the foreseeable future.

If there is any silver lining with budget deficits, it is that policymakers are forced to re-prioritize spending within available revenues. However, in Arizona, those budget decisions are complicated by a series of voter initiatives that handcuffed lawmaker's budget authority. Those initiatives have mandated expenditures for education, low income health care, early childhood programs, and land conservation. Each has played a role in increasing the deficit.

Proposition 301 would revert the balance of the monies in the land conservation fund to the state general fund. If passed, Proposition 301 will plug a \$124 million hole in the current state budget. Failure will result in further reductions in the programs that receive state support: K-12 schools, universities, low income health care, and prison spending. Or worse, taxpayers will once again be looked upon to close this chronic budget deficit.

**Kevin McCarthy, President, Arizona Tax Research Association,
Gilbert**

Paid for by Arizona Tax Research Association

**Lori Daniels, Board Member, Arizona Tax Research
Association, Chandler**

ARGUMENTS "AGAINST" PROPOSITION 301

Argument Against PROP 301

Land Conservation Fund Transfer

PROP 301 will divert funding from the Public Conservation Account in the Land Conservation Fund, which was established by Arizona voters in 1998. Voting NO on PROP 301 will protect the decision made by Arizona voters to fund this land conservation account. If approved, this measure will divert \$123.5 million in funds to the general fund. PROP 301 ignores the will of Arizona voters. Raiding the Public Conservation Account allows the legislature to reject the cause for which Arizona voters approved these monies.

As voters in this state, we must trust that the initiatives and funding we approve at the ballot will be respected and instituted as written. If we allow these funds to be raided by the state legislature, then Arizona voters will lose their rights to approve initiatives. Arizona will become a state that is governed by politicians and not its citizens.

Protect the decisions of Arizona's voters. The Arizona Education Association requests that you vote NO on PROP 301.

**John Wright, President, Arizona Education Association,
Phoenix**

**Andrew Morrill, Vice President, Arizona Education Association,
Phoenix**

Paid for by AEA Education Improvement Fund

THE LAND CONSERVATION FUND - Con Statement

The League of Women Voters of Arizona urges you to vote NO on Prop 301.

If approved, it would transfer the balance of the Land Conservation Fund into the General Fund. Voters established the Land Conservation Fund in 1998 when they approved the Growing Smarter Act (referred to the ballot by the AZ Legislature).

This Fund consists of monies appropriated from the state general fund and monies received as donations. \$20,000,000 was appropriated annually for 11 years from the state general fund to the Land Conservation Fund. The **final** appropriation is scheduled in fiscal year 2010-11.

The dollars from this fund provide a matching grant for communities to acquire and manage development of state trust lands for conservation, including lands that are part of the Pima County Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the Flagstaff Open Space Plan, lands near Prescott, and more.

By diverting dollars from this fund, the Legislature hurts both conservation efforts and education – dollars from the Fund go into the Trust where the primary beneficiary is public education.

Our budget crisis will someday pass, but the negative impact to a child's education can have a long lasting detrimental legacy and our lands can be lost forever.

The legislature is returning this to the ballot because as a **Voter Protected** funding program, the monies cannot be transferred to the general fund without voters agreeing to it.

Do not let the legislature take these **Voter Protected funds** for the general budget. **Vote NO and continue to preserve open space and benefit public education.**

**Dr. Bonnie F. Saunders, President, League of Women Voters
of Arizona, Surprise**

**Dr. Barbara Klein, 1st Vice President, League of Women
Voters of Arizona, Scottsdale**

Paid for by League of Women Voters of Arizona

Say no to Legislative Sweep of Conservation Fund

Vote no on Proposition 301

Proposition 301 proposes to raid a voter-protected fund for land conservation and sweep it into the General Fund, where the Arizona Legislature will determine how it is appropriated.

The Land Conservation Fund was established by the voters in 1998 when they approved the Growing Smarter Act. The dollars in this fund provide a match for communities to acquire state trust lands for conservation, including lands that are part of the Pima County Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the Flagstaff Open Space Plan, lands near Prescott, and more.

By diverting dollars from the Land Conservation Fund, the legislature hurts both conservation efforts and education – dollars from the Land Conservation Fund go into the Trust to benefit the Trust beneficiaries. The primary beneficiary is public education. Some argue that these conservation dollars will not be used in a down economy, but land conservation continues in a down economy and in fact, much of the dollars generated recently for the trust, came from land conservation.

Arizona devotes limited dollars to conservation overall and the legislature has already raided most of the ones that did not enjoy the protection of voters. One need look no further than our State Parks to see how little this legislature values conservation. Don't let them do even more harm by sweeping these dollars.

We encourage you to vote no on Proposition 301.

**Jim Vaaler, Chairperson, Sierra Club – Grand Canyon
Chapter, Phoenix**

**Don Steuter, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club – Grand Canyon
Chapter, Phoenix**

Paid for by Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection urges voters to VOTE NO on Proposition 301. The citizens of Pima County have long been involved with planning for growth and protecting the environment. A result of this planning is the groundbreaking "Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan," by which the community strives to protect the most biologically important lands while guiding growth to less sensitive lands.

Comprehensive long-term solutions are needed in order to protect the unique areas of Arizona and the quality of life that is enjoyed by current residents. **We have an obligation to protect the saguaro studded hillsides, grass lands, oak flats, and ponderosa pine forests throughout the state for the benefit of wildlife and future generations.** Long-term strategies must include funding, in order to preserve these areas in perpetuity.

The Land Conservation Fund was established by the voters in 1998 when they approved the Growing Smarter Act. These dollars provide a match for communities to acquire state trust lands for conservation, including lands that are part of the Pima County Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Important lands have also been preserved throughout the State with the help of this fund.

In a slap to the will of the voters, the Arizona Legislature would like to spend these conservation dollars on whatever they want. **Proposition 301 proposes to raid a voter-protected fund for land conservation and sweep it into the General Fund.**

The raiding of conservation dollars also hurts education, as the dollars from the Land Conservation Fund go into the Education Trust, which benefits public education. Very limited dollars are spent by the State of Arizona on conservation. Please don't allow the Legislature to raid the few dollars we have to preserve the open space and natural beauty of our State.

We encourage you to VOTE NO on Proposition 301.

Carolyn Campbell, Executive Director, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Tucson

Paid for by Sky Island Alliance Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

Trevor Hare, Conservation Science Chair, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Tucson

THE SONORAN INSTITUTE OPPOSES PROPOSITION 301

When Arizona's citizens approved the Land Conservation Fund as part of the 1998 Growing Smarter Act they did so with a clear purpose and vision. They envisioned the permanent protection of certain Arizona lands in their natural condition. The message - that the value of some Arizona lands was best realized by conserving them - was simple and clear. We are convinced that those fundamental Arizona values have not changed.

Perhaps the best measure of the voter's wisdom back in 1998 is a simple drive through Arizona. In doing so, you will see the special lands and places that would have been lost had there been no Land Conservation Fund to protect them.

Proposition 301 sweeps from existence the last remaining state funds for meaningful preservation - every last dollar.

As Arizona's centennial fast approaches and we proudly celebrate our second century of statehood, what greater gift can we bequeath than that of saving just a few of those special places that honor our unique heritage and culture?

Vote for our legacy by voting "No" on Proposition 301.

Dave Richins, Director, Sun Corridor Legacy Program, The Sonoran Institute, Mesa

Paid for by The Sonoran Institute

Eric Gorsegrner, Associate Director, Sun Corridor Legacy Program, The Sonoran Institute, Phoenix

We, like all Arizonans, are concerned about our state's budget. However, we believe that using Growing Smarter funds that were approved by the voters in 1998 to support the acquisition of open space for conservation is a short-term fix that sacrifices a long-term vision. Using the Growing Smarter funds for deficit reduction badly undermines the ability of cities, towns, counties and non-profit organizations to preserve precious and threatened State Land. Growing Smarter funds have helped save important state lands like Go John Canyon, the Jewel of the Creek, the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the Valencia Archeological Site, and the Phoenix Sonoran Preserve. Natural open space is a major contributor to Arizona's quality of life and our ability to attract visitors, new residents, and key business to our beautiful state. Please vote No on Proposition 301 in order to maintain our ability to conserve precious state lands with Growing Smarter funds.

Oliver Smith, Chairman of the Board, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, Scottsdale

Paid for by McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

Ruthie Carll, Executive Director, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, Scottsdale

NO ☐